



# **Tackling Perinatal Health Equity: Creating A Payor-Funded Community Doula Program for Health Net, LLC.**

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*Coverage for  
every stage of life™*

The quiet crisis among African Americans: Pregnancy and childbirth are killing women at inexplicable rates

Systemic Racism Might Help Explain Why Black Women Are More Likely to Die From Pregnancy Than White Women

# *Huge Racial Disparities Found in Deaths Linked to Pregnancy*

Childbirth is killing black women in the US, and here's why





**Serena Williams**



**Kira Dixon Johnson**



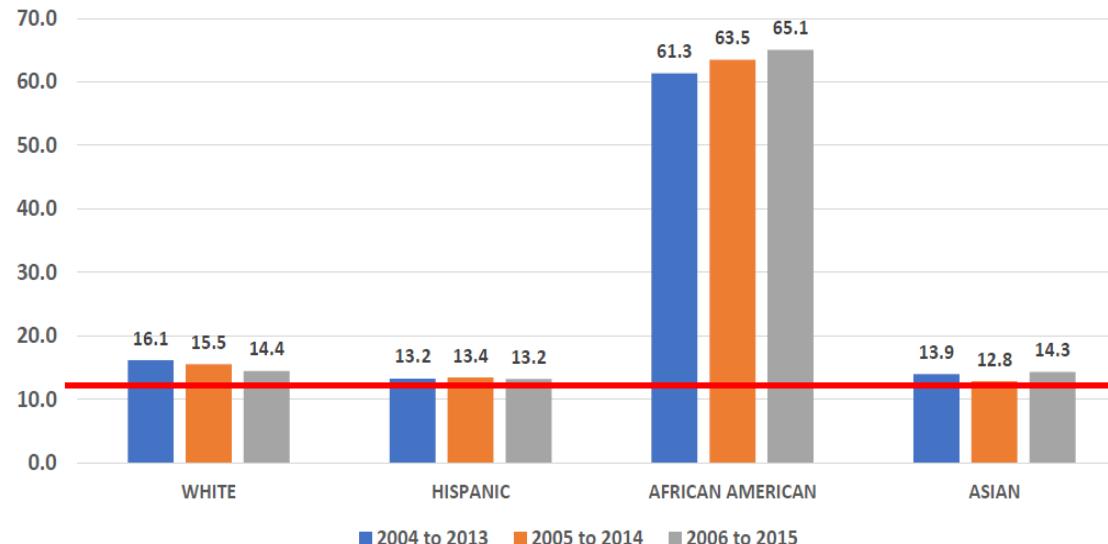
**Shalon Irving**

# Maternal Mortality Ratios by Race/Ethnicity Los Angeles County, 2004-2015



## Connectedness with Maternal Mortality?

Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births) by Race/Ethnicity, 10-Year Average,  
Los Angeles County 2004-2015

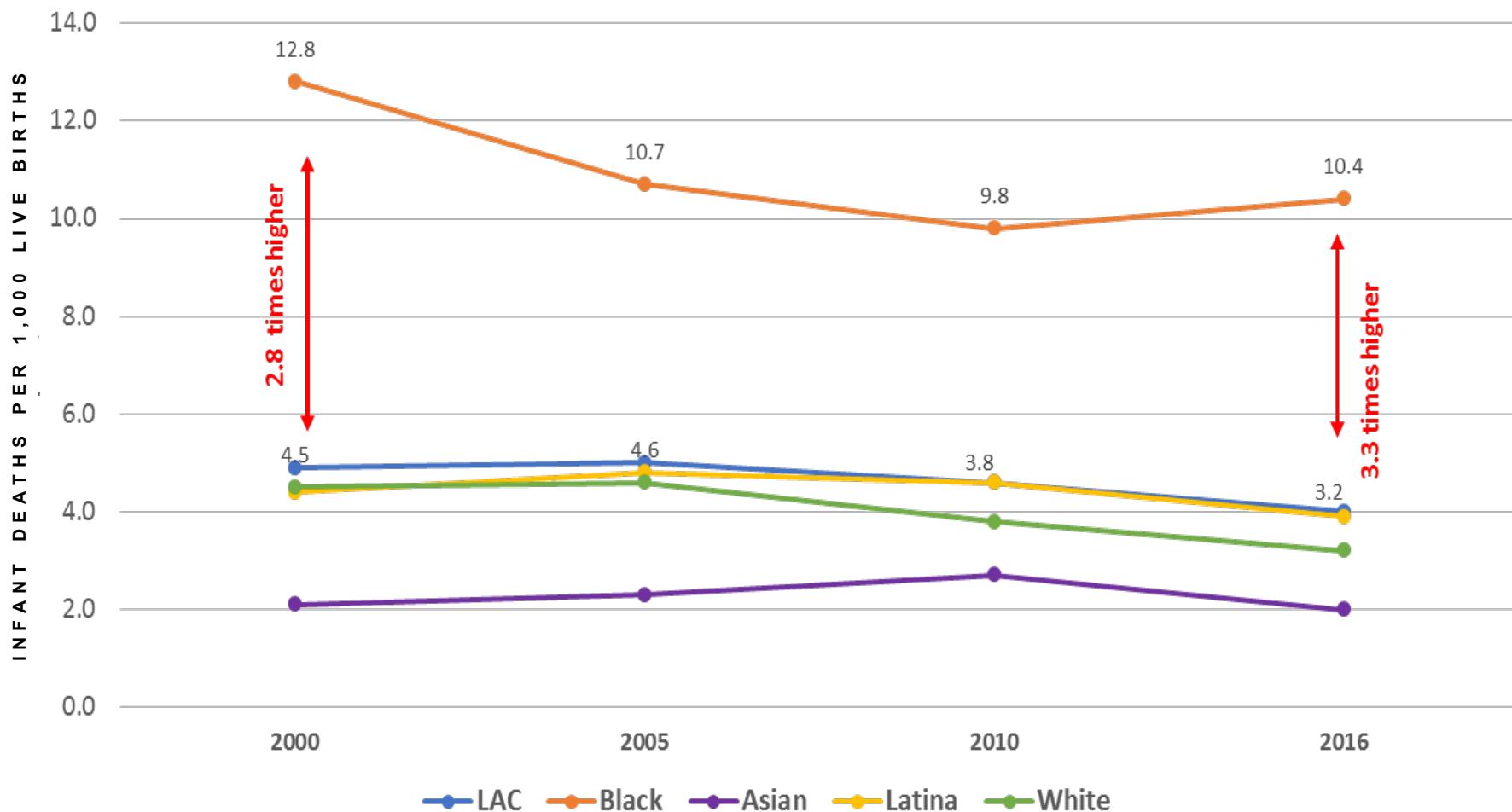


Maternal mortality is defined as any death during pregnancy and up to one year after childbirth. It is measured by the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), the number of maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births.

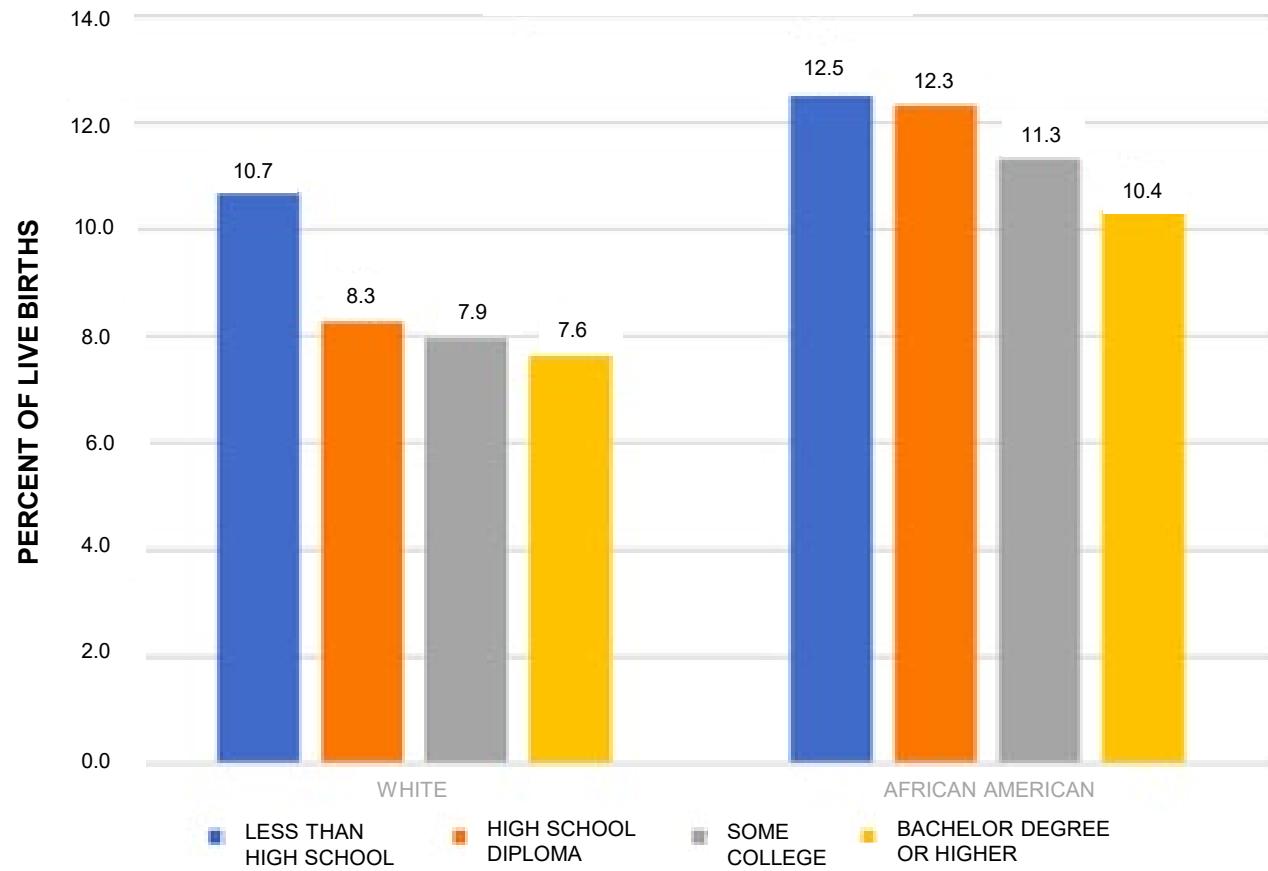
California Department of Public Health, 2004-2015 Birth and Death Statistical Files analyzed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division



## Infant Mortality Ratios by Race/Ethnicity Los Angeles County, 2000-2016



## Preterm Birth by Mother's Race/Ethnicity and Education Attainment Los Angeles County, 2016



# Emerging Science



ADVERSE SOCIAL EVENTS/  
DISCRIMINATION

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

PHYSICAL STRESS  
(Fight or Flight)

CUMULATIVE STRESS

Adverse health outcomes; Adverse pregnancy outcomes

## Did You Know...



“Most pregnancy-related deaths are preventable, demonstrating the need to identify and implement strategies to address the multiple contributing factors (CDC, 2019).”

# ACOG Committee Opinion No. 687 (2017)

## *Approaches to Limit Intervention During Labor and Birth<sup>2</sup>*

“Evidence suggests that, in addition to regular nursing care, continuous one-to-one **emotional support provided by support personnel**, such as a doula, is **associated with improved outcomes for women in labor.**”



# WHO Recommendations (2018)

## ***Intrapartum Care for a Positive Childbirth Experience***

“Reduce caesarean section by 25%, instrumental vaginal birth by 10% and the use of pain relief by 10%. These reductions could plausibly lead to **substantial cost savings**.”



# Our Response: Health Net funded Community Doula Project



# What is a Doula?

A Doula is a birthing companion that provides support, guidance, and health education during pregnancy and childbirth.

Doulas also provide advice on newborn care, breastfeeding support and guidance to mothers during postpartum period.

Doulas provide guidance on positioning during labor and support mom to keep blood pressure stable.

Advocating for mother's birth plan.



# The Health Net Community Doula Program

Pairs African-American/Black women enrolled with mostly African-American Doulas to offer:

- **3 Prenatal Visits (usually between 6wks and birth)**
- **Labor and Delivery Support (36 wks until delivery)**
- **3 Postpartum Visits (up to 8 wks postpartum)**
- **Childbirth Education Classes**
- **Fatherhood Education Classes**

# Community Based Doulas



**Prominent members of the community;**  
Similarities in language, background, culture

Often provide **low or no cost services** to clients

Provide **more home visits** than traditional doulas

Training provides **ongoing mentorship** and supervision

**Training includes how social determinants of health play an integral role in birth disparities affecting communities of color**

They also offer prenatal and postpartum home visits, childbirth and breastfeeding education, and referrals for needed health or **social services**.



# Partnering Agencies



**"Fostering Diversity & Supporting Communities  
and the Providers who Serve them."**



## Partnering Agency:

1. Create Budget and Payment Structure
2. Recruit, Train and Supervise Doulas
3. Collect and Organize data
4. Submit Data for Analysis

# Doula Payment Structure

- \$100 per prenatal visit ( 3 visits)
- \$100 per postpartum visit (3 visits)
- \$1,250 for labor and delivery
- Monthly Meetings
- Gas/Mileage/Parking
- Meals
- Hotel room (upon request)

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# Funding Structure

## Health Net Sponsorship:

- **Salaries**
- Education/Training
- HIPPA Compliance
- IT Systems
- Malpractice Insurance
- Educational Materials
- Printing
- Rent for office space

# Recruitment & Referrals

- Outreach calls to Health Net members
- Community Based Organizations
- HN Case Management
- Community events
- Provider
- Hospital
- Doula



The Health Net Community Doula Team (Photo by Maggie Ehrig)

# Preliminary Data/Results:

9

2

77

71

14

6

48

9

16

**NUMBER OF DOULAS**

**NUMBER OF SUPERVISORS**

**CLIENTS SERVED TO DATE**

**NUMBER OF BIRTHS**

**PENDING DATA COLLECTION**  
(Clients)

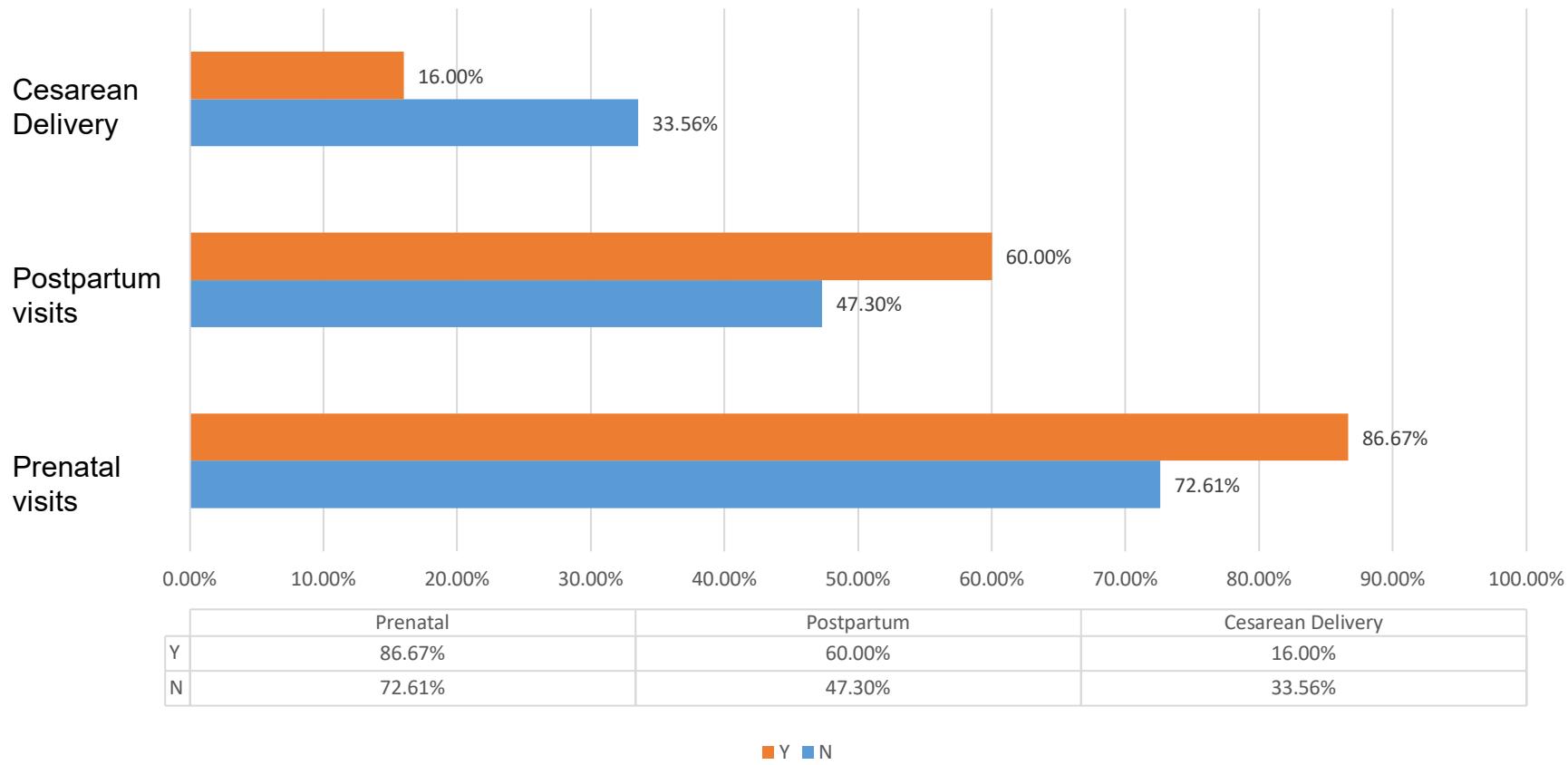
**PENDING BIRTHS**

**VAGINAL BIRTHS**

**C-SECTIONS**  
(includes 2 sets of twins)

**C-SECTION % RATE**

# Evaluation of Performance of L.A. Doula Project



# Evaluation Criteria:

- **Comprehensive**
  - Doulas
  - Birth Clients
- **Unbiased**
  - External agency
- **Thorough**
  - Qualitative and Quantitative



# Defining Success:

- **Improvement in Outcomes:** intrapartum (decrease c/s, decreased **anesthesia** use) and postpartum (decreased depression, increased PP visit follow up)
- **Advancing the Coverage for Community-based Doulas**, especially for women on Medi-Cal throughout California. **Building program sustainability.**
- **Demonstrating an ROI** for other health plans **to replicate** this program. **Elevating African American Female Leaders**
- **Establish income sustainability** for community doulas.

# HEALTH NET STAFF



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# Cherished Futures for Black Moms and Babies

In 2019, Health Net funded a 2-year grant to Hospital Association of Southern CA's Communities Lifting Communities and the Public Health Alliance of Southern CA to pilot the Cherished Futures program.

- A multi-sector **collaborative effort to reduce Black infant mortality** and improve maternal patient experiences and safety among Black mothers and birthing people in **South Los Angeles and Antelope Valley**.
- **Build effective and productive relationships** between hospital leaders, public health officials, health plans and community partners
- Affect systems change at three levels: clinical, institutional and community

# Cherished Futures: Accomplishments to Date

- Launched the collaborative and **secured participation from 5 pilot hospital partners** located in Service Planning Areas (SPAs) 1, 6 and 8, encompassing Antelope Valley, South Los Angeles, and South Bay. Collectively, these five hospitals accounted for one-third of all African American hospital births in Los Angeles County in 2016.
- Conducted rigorous data dives and **performed assessments on hospital capacity and opportunities for growth** in addressing birth outcomes for Black Moms and babies
- Hosted multiple **web workshops** with key leaders including Sen. Holly Mitchell and Dr. Elaine Batchlor on topics such as **best practices on maternal health equity programs, implicit bias**, role of data; Integrated hospital teams with an advisory member to ground intervention plans in Black women's experiences; Provided technical assistance sessions to each hospital to assist in the development of their implementation plans
- Developed joint op-eds and editorials widely circulated to communicate the collaboratives' efforts in addressing the birth inequities in the African American community

# Cherished Futures: Next Steps



- On December 11<sup>th</sup>, the **five participating hospitals will shared their community, institutional and clinical intervention plans** to the collaborative. This will be the final web workshop for the collaborative.
- All five hospitals have committed to **implement a data collection and review intervention on perinatal indicators such as preterm birth, cesareans, preeclampsia and other maternal morbidities.**
- **CLC and the Alliance has secured funding from multiple philanthropic organizations to continue the next phase of hospital implementation plans through 2021.**
- **Develop a report on shared findings**, lessons learned and recommendations for improvements throughout LA County and other So Cal regions.

# IRTH App



IRTH (as in Birth, but without the B for bias), is a "Yelp-like" review and rating app for hospitals and physicians made by and for Black women and birthing people of color.

Focuses on 5 regions to capture reviews of Black and Brown birthing people. ☰

Sacramento/Los Angeles, NYC, New Orleans, Detroit, and the metro Washington D.C./DMV area.

<https://birthwithoutbias.com/>

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# Thank You!